



## **An Action Research of Using Vocabulary Wheel to Improve Year 2 Pupils' Vocabulary in the Malaysian Classroom**

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### **AUTHORS INFO**

Yee Bee Choo  
IPG Kampus Tun Hussein Onn  
[beechoo.yee@iptho.edu.my](mailto:beechoo.yee@iptho.edu.my)  
+60127541148

Harzuwani binti Wahab  
IPG Kampus Tun Hussein Onn  
[harzuwani.wahab@yahoo.com](mailto:harzuwani.wahab@yahoo.com)

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### **Abstract**

This research was conducted to find out whether or not the use of Vocabulary Wheel could help to improve pupils' vocabulary. The data for the study were obtained from four pupils of a primary school in Johor. These pupils were targeted due to their low level of proficiency in English language. Vocabulary Wheel was used as the strategy as the pupils were lack of vocabulary thus affecting their language learning. This is an action research and three data gathering methods such as pupils' work, teacher's reflective journal and interview were used. The findings of this study proved that the use of Vocabulary Wheel helped to improve the pupils' vocabulary as the pupils were able to remember the words longer and know how to use them in the right context. It also helped to encourage their participation and promote their interest. This study proposes the suggestion of using ICT to improve the implementation of the strategy.

**Keywords:** vocabulary, participation, interest, Vocabulary Wheel

### **A. Introduction**

As we all know, vocabulary is an essential skill for learning to read and write. According to Ying (2010), vocabulary plays an important role in English language acquisition. Based on my past teaching experiences during practicum, I noticed that most of the pupils had difficulties in vocabulary learning that leads to their poor reading comprehension. According to Peter (2011), vocabulary is important in reading comprehension because it is part of background knowledge. We should bear in mind that vocabulary plays an utmost significant role in English language and it is an inseparable part of any language learning process (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012). When the pupils were unable to understand the basic words in reading, listening, speaking and writing, they could not comprehend the meaning of the text. Therefore, it would be impossible for them to learn a language without mastering vocabulary.

I had experience in teaching pupils with low level of proficiency who did not understand English language at all during my previous practicum. The pupils could not remember the vocabulary taught and did not know how to use and apply those words in their daily basis. Apart from that, I observed that their level of proficiency was low due to the language barrier and mistakes they made throughout the teaching and learning process. Obviously, it could not be denied the lack of English language proficiency is one of the causes of reading difficulties among English learners.

Interference of native language is one of the factors hinders language acquisition. The pupils are influenced by their mother tongue, which contributes to the difficulties in learning and using the English language. The pupils are lack of exposure to English language due to the local setting where most of our people use Bahasa Malaysia as a means of communication. The pupils' parents in a rural setting usually do not know the needs of using the other language in context. Therefore, the pupils do not have the ability and chance to use the language. In addition, the pupils use their native language to communicate with their peers and teachers and they seldom use English.

During my past teaching experiences, I used various vocabulary strategies in the teaching and learning process yet it was still unable to produce promising outcomes. I used gestures to encourage the pupils to learn vocabulary but they still showed the same result that led to my frustration. I had to teach them the same topic for several weeks to familiarise them with the vocabulary taught. Apart from that, I had to use *Bahasa Malaysia* in translation to explain on what they were supposed to do as translation could help to ease their understanding of the reading text.

As a result, I sought a way to overcome this problem and provided a less threatening environment that might help the pupils to improve their English. This current study was aimed to improve the vocabulary of Year 2 pupils by using Vocabulary Wheel and it sought to answer the following research questions:

- a) How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to improve pupils' vocabulary?
- b) How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to increase pupils' participation in teaching and learning process?
- c) How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to promote pupils' interest in learning English?

## B. Literature Review

### 1. Scaffolding

The underlying concept of theory used for this research is scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1986). As we know, scaffolding can be used to teach all language skills and components. The pupils receive the help from others especially their teachers in learning. Lewis (2015) defined scaffolding as the idea that specialised instructional supports that need to be in place in order to best facilitate learning when pupils are first introduced to a new subject.

Visual scaffolding is one of the techniques used in this research. Images and words are the examples of visual scaffolding that are commonly used. The pupils greatly benefit from the type of scaffolding that makes extensive use of visual aid as it plays a significant role to provide the input and knowledge to them. In relation to my research focus, I used Vocabulary Wheel as my scaffolding tool. I used Vocabulary Wheel to visualise the images and words so that the pupils would have a better understanding of the written text. It can be used to assist their learning and at the same time arouse their interest. I believed that the use of Vocabulary Wheel as a technique in vocabulary teaching would help to ease the pupils' understanding. This can be done by providing guidance to them in the early stage. Therefore, I decided to use visual scaffolding in my research to ease the pupils' learning.

### 2. Different Learning Styles

Howard Gardner developed the Multiple Intelligence Theory in 1983 and identified nine learning styles: visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-Mathematical, the naturalist and the existential intelligences (1999). According to Gardner (1991), "students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform and understand in different ways."

Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic (VAK) is a theory introduced by Fleming (2001). This theory debates on the different learning styles of people as it acknowledges that the pupils have different preferred learning on how to access information. Visual learning is learning through seeing, Aural learning is learning through listening and Kinaesthetic learning is learning through moving, doing or touching. Fleming (2001) believed "most people possess a dominant

or preferred learning style.” Therefore, teacher’s role is to identify the pupils’ style of learning to implement the best strategy which meets their needs.

Mayer (2008) advocated cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. He defined multimedia learning as the delivery of instructional content using multiple modes that include visual and auditory information (Mayer, 2008). In relation to my research, I decided to use Vocabulary Wheel to ease the pupils’ learning.

Vocabulary Wheel is an innovation from the idea of “Wheel of Fortune”. I decided to redesign the wheel and use it as a tool to teach vocabulary. The wheel is equipped with five pictures and word cards for each picture. A few criteria had been taken into consideration in developing the strategy. The use of visual aids such as pictures gives a great impact towards pupils’ learning. Ayuningram (2012) claimed that the use of the picture will greatly help the pupils to understand the meaning of the words from the picture, so they will be able to learn and remember the words easily.

Apart from that, durability is also one of the important aspects in designing the Vocabulary Wheel. The Vocabulary Wheel was made up from plastic board which was very light and durable. It could also be used repeatedly. Other than that, it could also be used to teach any type of vocabulary because we could easily replace the pictures with the new ones since it has a clear or transparent pocket for each division. The hidden words could also be replaced easily. This Vocabulary Wheel can be placed in the school and it is flexible as it can be used to teach other subjects not only English language subject. The use of Vocabulary Wheel can minimise the cost spent for teaching aids.

### C. Methodology

#### 1. Research Design

This research is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) model which is widely used among practitioners. I chose this model in this research because it can be used to foster deeper understanding of a given situation. The study took only one cycle as the duration of one month was given to carry out the research. The cycle of Kemmis & McTaggart involves four stages: Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect and I carried out my action research project as below:

- Plan : I looked at my classroom practice and identified my pupils’ problem in learning vocabulary through diagnostic test. I planned Vocabulary Wheel as a strategy to improve my pupils’ vocabulary.
- Act : I conducted the lesson by using Vocabulary Wheel for an hour each time. The implementation took three times for three weeks.
- Observe : I distributed worksheets to the pupils to monitor their progress in learning vocabulary. I also wrote the reflective journals to see the pupils’ participation in learning and interviewed them about their interest in learning. All the data were collected.
- Reflect : I reflect on my strengths and weaknesses in the teaching practice.

#### 2. Participants

The participants involved in this study are four pupils from Year 2 in a primary school in Johor. The school is a small rural school with only thirty-one pupils. In Malaysia, this type of school is called “Sekolah Kurang Murid” or *School With Few Pupils* and it is usually located in rural area. In Year 2, there were only four pupils in the class. They are in an average of eight years old and they are all Malay boys. They shared the same socioeconomic background in which all their fathers are farmers. I decided to choose this group of participants because their level of proficiency was low. These pupils were lack of vocabulary as they never used English at home and at school.

#### 3. Technique of Data Collection

In the beginning of the lesson, I introduced the Vocabulary Wheel to the pupils in order to familiarise them with its use in learning vocabulary. I used the Vocabulary Wheel to introduce new words to the pupils on the category of places, animals and body parts. There are five divisions in Vocabulary Wheel. Each division has a picture and hidden word. The pupils were asked to spin the wheel and they needed to say aloud the name of the picture. They were given feedback once they gave the answer. The pupils were asked to open the hidden word and check whether their answer was correct or not. In addition, the use of Vocabulary Wheel can promote collaborative and co-operative learning amongst the pupils. They can work in groups to solve

the task given by the teacher and take turns to spin the wheel. The pupils were able to be active participants throughout the teaching and learning activities and the use of Vocabulary Wheel helped to arouse their interest in the lesson.

After that, I distributed the worksheets to the pupils in order to check their understanding on the lesson. Besides that, I wrote a reflective journal once the lesson ended. In my reflective journals, I wrote about pupils' participation in the activities. After that, I interviewed my target participants with the intention to check on the pupils' opinions and thoughts about the activities carried out.

#### 4. Instruments

In this research, I used three data sources, which were pupils' works, teacher's reflective journal and interview. Although the scores in pupils' work were quantified, the basis of the research was very much qualitative in nature as it serves to support the findings from the reflective journal and interview.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis was carried out for the three data collected. The pupils' work were analysed in frequency count to see the increase in number of correct answers scored by the pupils. The mean and standard deviation were not counted as there were only 5 questions in each worksheet and the purpose of pupils' work was to see the improvement made by the pupils to support the analysis in reflective journal and interview. All the data were analysed thematically and the emerging themes were improvement in vocabulary, active participation and increased interest.

##### (a) Improvement in Vocabulary

The pupils were given three worksheets which required them to write the correct words. The first worksheet comprised of five pictures with two choices of answer. The pupils were required to circle the correct words based on the pictures given. Meanwhile, for the second worksheet, the pupils were asked to write the correct answer in the box provided by referring to the choices of answer given. They were required to identify the names of the five animals and write the answer in the box provided. The third worksheet consisted of word search and pictures. The pupils were asked to circle the name of the body parts based on the pictures given. There were altogether five items in each worksheet. The results of the worksheets are shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Progress in pupils' work**

Participant	Number of Correct Answers		
	Worksheet 1	Worksheet 2	Worksheet 3
P 1	3	4	4
P 2	3	3	4
P 3	2	3	4
P 4	5	2	5

Table 1 indicates the results of pupils' work from the first worksheet until the third worksheet. The first participant managed to answer three out of five questions correctly in the first worksheet. Meanwhile, for the second and third worksheets, he had improved in that he could answer four questions correctly.

For the second participant, he was able to answer three questions correctly for the first and second worksheets. Meanwhile, for the third worksheet, he managed to get four answers correctly. The third participant was also able to show his improvement by scoring 2, 3 and 4 correct answers for the three worksheets.

In contrast to the first, second and third participants; the last participant was able to get all correct answers correctly in the first worksheet. Meanwhile, for the second worksheet he only managed to get two answers correctly. This might be due to the participant's confusion when he could not differentiate with the animals "goat", "horse" and "sheep" because these three animals looked similar to him and he was unable to differentiate which one was the correct answer for each animal. However, he was able to maintain his performance in the third worksheet where he managed to get all correct answers. Therefore, we could see the pupils' progress in that they could answer more correctly in the third worksheet.

Based on my reflective journal, I also found that the use of visual aids such as pictures and words was able to grab the pupils' attention and make them stay focused in the lesson much longer. They were able to sit longer each time and they did not disturb other friends during the lesson. The interview responses given "I am able to remember words easily" and "I can remember the words when doing worksheets" also support pupils' development in vocabulary. This suggests the use of Vocabulary Wheel help the pupils to learn the words that increased their understanding in using the words.

**(b) Increased Participation**

Based on the reflective journals written after each lesson, I found that the pupils like to take part in the activities and such activities were able to arouse their interest in learning thus created passionate involvement within the pupils. The use of Vocabulary Wheel also affected their social skills because it promoted social interaction among the pupils as they were asked to work in groups, thus they interacted with the group members during the activities.

**(c) Increased Interest**

The pupils had shown increased interest in learning English. All the participants interviewed agreed that the use of Vocabulary Wheel was the reason why they were interested and they enjoyed the lessons as the lessons were no longer boring. Below were the responses given by each participant.

P1: I feel excited during teaching and learning process because I got the opportunity to spin the wheel.

P2: It is very interesting. I was excited when I got the chance to play.

P3: I enjoyed English classes because I do not feel bored.

P4: I like the spinning of the wheel.

Vocabulary Wheel is a good strategy to make the lesson fun and enjoyable as they pupils had the opportunity to spin the wheel and they were not bored during the English lesson.

## **D. Findings and Discussion**

### *Research Question One*

Based on the data analysis from pupils' work, I found that Vocabulary Wheel influenced pupils' learning in which it helped them to improve their vocabulary. It could be seen through their progress from the first worksheet until the third worksheet. This helps to answer my first research question "How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to improve pupils' vocabulary?" The participants were introduced to Vocabulary Wheel for the first time during the first implementation. Because of this reason, their performance in the first worksheet was not so good where they only managed to answer two and three words correctly. However, the participants were able to show their progress in which they managed to get four to five answers correctly in the third worksheet.

The analysis from reflective journal and interview also supported pupils' improvement in vocabulary. Tight's (2010) findings had showed that mixed modality instruction which combined visual, auditory and tactile/kinaesthetic could stimulate the greatest learning and vocabulary retention. This is supported by Sadeghi & Farzizadeh (2013) who agreed that teaching vocabulary through visual aids help pupils gain more in vocabulary learning. As I taught vocabulary of nouns such as places, animals and body parts through Vocabulary Wheel, the pupils were able to remember vocabulary much longer compared to before its implementation in the classroom. Vocabulary Wheel enabled them to remember the words such as canteen, field, horse, rabbit, nose, mouth and so forth. These results indicated that teaching participants to widen their vocabulary by using Vocabulary Wheel did improve their vocabulary learning.

### *Research Question Two*

The second research question was "How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to encourage pupils' participation in teaching and learning process?" I was able to monitor the pupils' participation during the teaching and learning process by using Vocabulary Wheel. When I was reflecting, I had taken into consideration on few aspects such as what and how the activities were carried out, the pupils' participation in the activities and pupils' feelings throughout the activities. These aspects assisted me to see the pupils' participation in classroom activities. Based on what I had written in the reflective journal, I realised that the participants like to engage in the activities conducted in classroom as it promoted group works among the pupils.

According to Ward (2010), pupils who participate in groups show more interest in classroom activities. I found that the pupils liked to interact and communicate among their group members.

It showed that the use of Vocabulary Wheel was able to arouse their interest to engage in those activities that leads to their active participation in classroom activities. Before the implementation, these participants were passive participants but after the implementation of using Vocabulary Wheel, it helped to encourage their participation in teaching and learning process.

#### *Research Question Three*

Reid (1999) mentions some of the benefits of increasing learners' awareness of their own learning styles: "higher interest and motivation in the learning process, increased student responsibility for their own learning, and greater classroom community. These are affective changes, and the changes have resulted in more effective learning" (p. 300). I noticed that the pupils' attention span had increased. Before the implementation, the pupils' attention span was very limited and they could not focus in the lesson. They tended to play with their friends and did something else rather than focused in the lesson. However, after the implementation of Vocabulary Wheel, the pupils were more motivated to learn and they were able to focus in the lesson and engaged in classroom activities.

The responses given by the target participants during the interview answered the third research question "How does the use of Vocabulary Wheel help to promote pupils' interest in learning?" As we could see, all of them gave positive responses that the use of Vocabulary Wheel helped them to gain interest rather than using the textbook in learning. The reasons that contributed to their positive responses were the combination of the use of visual aids and game in the intervention. The participants stated that visual aids such as pictures and written words affected their interest in learning because they were able to see the pictures and words clearly. Moreover, the use of visual aids helped them as beginner learners to remember the vocabulary easily and influenced their interest to learn.

### **E. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results and findings had shown that the use of Vocabulary Wheel improved the pupils' language learning in vocabulary. They were able to remember vocabulary easily with the help of images and words. It also encouraged their participation and promoted their interest in learning vocabulary. Therefore, teachers should make every concentrated effort to cater for the needs of students of different learning styles in order to maximise their learning in the classroom.

Although the implementation of Vocabulary Wheel brought positive impacts towards participants' learning, yet there were rooms for improvement. For this reason, I proposed few suggestions in order to overcome the shortcomings or limitations of Vocabulary Wheel to enhance the pupils' performance in language learning.

I would like to propose the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the implementation. This is because the use of ICT can assist the pupils' learning. According to Yusuf (as cited in Amin, 2010), the field of education has been affected by ICT, which has undoubtedly affected teaching, learning and research. Therefore, I would propose to integrate the use of ICT in the next research. The combination of Vocabulary Wheel and ICT will influence the pupils' learning hence increase their attention to stay focused in the lesson.

Besides, the integration of ICT is practical in which we can teach the other topics or subjects using the same wheel but for different content and context. We just need to change the content in the slide presentation. It is time saving because we do not have to spend our time to redesign other teaching materials to teach another topics or subjects. Furthermore, we are also able to use our ICT skills in teaching and learning process.

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